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WANTS SUPPLIED.

STATUTE fairs—bouldered down into 'stattits' by centuries of British usage—are, as everybody knows, out of fashion. They are to be met with only in pastorals and a few snug towns in the midland counties. In pastorals may be read of apple-cheeked maidens, all modest mien and reverential curtesy, fascinating the eldest sons of the neighbouring barons by their bashful eyes and naive parlance, by their pretty blush and sympathetic twitter, as they stand among the lilac trees, and daffodils and cowslips, under a rosy April sky. In the midland counties, may be seen, in market-places, amidst other coarse and noisy doings of a fair, a crowd of saucy, big-lipped, rough-handed house-women, perfectly up to the business of bargaining for the doing of as little work and the receiving of as much pay as possible, and with dispositions to carouse so uproariously, after 'stattit' is over, in low beer-houses, with the young men who have been their yoke-meets in the day's inspection, that people of gentle nurture leave the streets they ever and anon burst into, and very wisely stay at home.

But very few of the thousands of young women who have labour to sell get purchasers at 'stattits.' Registry-offices, agencies, and the like, have taken their place. Now a days, if people want a house, a shop, a castle, a mine, there are agents who can let them have them; if anything in the live-stock and less expensive way be wanted, such as a governess, a reader, an amanuensis, a housemaid, or a cook, there are agents who can get them by the score.

Keepers of registration-offices have nothing directly to do with the terms on which their 'parties' may mutually agree. They merely, on the receipt of a small fee, allow entrance to rooms; an exchange, indeed, in which the wanters and the wanted may meet, and in which they make the best bargain they can. These are the offices where metropolitan maids and mistresses spend uncomfortable and exasperating days: they are the places, also, where the spectator may get much insight into character, if her mind can be only disencum-

bered of the perplexities of maid-choosing, and if she have calmness enough left her to look round. Paying a modest half-crown the other day, in a domestic difficulty that had required the piping of all hands, we were initiated into this method of getting wants supplied, and think it worth while to record the initiation.

The *locus* was a large painted and wainscoted room, which had been a rich man's dining-room a century or so ago, and which was embellished with a full-length portrait of a gentleman of the Jacobian period, giving it an aristocratic flavour still. The only other mural decorations of the apartment were notices, framed, setting forth that for a guinea a year ladies could be supplied with as many servants, of every variety, as they required; and that ladies must shew their tickets on entering; and that they must on no account send a servant from the offices till she was regularly engaged. There were chairs round the room, and forms and sofas, enough to have accommodated forty or fifty mistresses, if as many had presented themselves at once; and on these chairs and sofas the ladies sat, dowager-fashion, with their backs stiff against the walls, in a formidable and weary row. The unmistressed labouresses sat in a smaller room, less comfortable still, through which every lady had to pass on coming from the street; and if it had not been that the proprietor's desk were here, and that he watched everything with a vigilant ear and eye, sharp would have been the scrutiny, and lowering the comments, of its occupiers, as this passing through was done. Mute, however, must be the criticism with that broad labour-dealer in full view; narrowed to a secret nudge, or momentary lengthening of the mouth, must be the 'adding-up' that would have found experienced utterance at any other time; and dreary work the stream of serving-women must have found it, sitting out the long hours of an office-day. Modest little maidens were some of them; unfledged little Tilly Slow-boys; as unlike the *habituée* of the institution as a sigh to a horse-laugh; but whether the eyes that envied the sweeping skirts of the mistresses were raised defiantly, or timidly and respectfully

let fall, there was but one rule for all these silent sitters—that they were to present themselves to each lady as she arrived, provided they belonged to the class of servants she had certified that she required.

Enter from them, the day this sketch is taken, a little old woman, so round in features, and head, and form, the wonder is she was not rolled in, instead of having equilibrium enough to walk. She is very dirty: as unsavoury-looking as a yellow fog; and this her *début*, on this particular morning, is thoroughly in vain. She goes to one lady, and to the next, and to the next, receiving a shake of the head from all, till the circuit is completed, and she is out again at the door. Had she been 'quoted' in any 'money-market,' she would have been recorded as 'flat:' there was no buyer to give her a single bid. But no matter. She knows that, if not that day, why, then, some other, before a week is out at most, there will be some pressed mistress come, who, either from vehemence of temper or overplus of children, will be thankful for her help; and she resumes her seat in the anteroom, and patiently awaits her chance.

Enter, in place of her, a tall, thin, sharp-featured, red-haired girl, with Fury written on her face as clearly as Cleanliness, and who justifies this index she carries with her by a quick, firm tread. She takes sweeping inspection of the mistresses by one rapid glance, and attacks one whom for some reason she fancies will answer her purpose best.

'Can you cook?' the lady, who may appropriately be called the Victim, asks in a meek voice.

'Everything you can expect a general servant to cook!' answers La Rouge vividly; so vividly, indeed, it can be heard by all the other ladies, who shrug their shoulders at one another and titter.

'Can you wait at table?' the Victim falters. 'I—I—don't keep much company'—for she sees La Rouge's countenance lowering, and she knows the other mistresses will hear the retort—'but I—I should like you to know how to wait a little!'

'I waited at my last place, and the lady was quite a lady,' is La Rouge's reply; under the shadow of the slur implied by which the Victim grows more uneasy still, and searches about for some pretext by which she can bid her opponent go. But it is of no use. All the points, which she dilates upon in hopes they will be found insurmountable, are made nothing of by the victorious La Rouge. The work suits her, the wages suit her, the times for going out suit her, the *locale* even (which comes in for a share of questioning) is to her mind; and the Victim, with no reasonable excuse for saying no, and with the *ennui* on her, perhaps, of two or three fruitless days' attendance at the office, concludes an unwilling bargain, and making an appointment with her captor, takes herself away.

Enter a little, dark, good-tempered-looking Irish woman, age about thirty; appearance so much neater and more prosperous than that of her countrywomen in general, she evidently has often been supposed to be of other nationality, and is in hopes she will be so supposed again. She chances,

however, to address herself to a hawk-like, brown-skinned, brown-eyed little lady, who accuses her of her Celtism after she has delivered herself of her first word.

'You are Irish!' the velvet-mantled, flounced, fussy little mistress cried.

'I am!' grinned out Miss Erin. 'But if I do my work, what's the harm of that?'

There was so much good-humour in this admission and justification, the mistress could not but be good-humoured too. 'No harm,' she said, 'in being Irish; but it's your religion. I object to that.'

'Sure, it's the same God we say our prayers to!' chirped out Miss Erin, with the same broad, good-tempered grin.

'Yes, yes,' the lady said. 'It is not that I mean; it is your hours. You will want to go out on Sunday mornings, and that I could not manage.'

'Just one hour!' Miss Erin argued: 'and what's an hour! And if I do my work on Saturday nights, sure it's the same to you!'

It did seem hard to say No to so much fun, and smiles, and civility; to such a blithe round face, that seemed to promise no end of hard work, and the overcoming of every difficulty by sheer good-will; but the little lady in the velvet mantle had been five-and-twenty years a mistress (as she subsequently told the lady sitting next her, with emphasis impossible to be expressed by type), and she was not going to be coaxed or grinned into an engagement that would not suit her; and Miss Erin was fain to pass to another lady, and begin her questioning and answering over again.

Enter a fine, showy, handsome-looking girl, with gilt starlets on the blue velvet of her bonnet, and a clear wholesome skin. She is Saxon, pure; thick-breasted, which makes her thick-voiced as well; wax-work eyed; loud-breathing; and she holds in her hand a just-snatched-off black-spotted veil. There is not a fourth part the work in her there is in the young woman from the Green Isle; but the presence she has with her is such that the lady to whom she attaches herself begins the business of questioning her with satisfaction beaming brightly in her eye.

Can she do so?—and so?—and so?—and so? the lady asks; quite determined to essay the blonde girl, whatever her answers may be.

Yes; she can do *that*, the blonde girl huskily admits. And she can do *that*, and *that*. Yes. She isn't a *very* good cook; and she can't 'get up' very well; and she doesn't like house-work; and she has always been used to being called; but she *dares* say she could wake without; and she would do anything she was *told*; if she didn't do it right, and the lady would tell her, she would find her very glad to learn. She only has to be *told*.—No; she never had been used to washing, and there had always been a boy to clean the boots and shoes; but she didn't *mind* undertaking everything, and the lady would find she *only* had to be told.

Exactly. The lady would find she only had to be told—every mistress within sight and hearing declared, the moment after she had triumphantly sailed out. She would find such an eternal 'tell, tell, telling,' such a perpetual reminding of neglected duties—the blonde beauty being, meanwhile, in serene appreciation of her own attractions, and in fixed determination that they should not suffer from wear and tear—that the whip and spur would become odious from incessant usage, and the

uphill battle would come exhaustingly to an end. But this only as occupation during the few minutes before another arrival comes: and here—before the prophesying is fully over, or the narrative of experiences the prophesying suggests—the new arrival is—a poor, thin, dry old woman; tight, withered, hard; a weird witch wizen-hide, who ought to have a fireside of her own, and not be dependent on any lady's smiles. She comes submissively and hesitatingly into the room, with the shadow of the 'No' she is expecting already on her face; but there is luck in store for her of which she has scarcely dreamed. She has been meekly round half the circle of mistresses, who, rather than shake their heads at the poor old creature, are looking up and looking down, to her right and to her left, pretending to be too much occupied in chat to see her, when one looks full at her, and asks particulars of her work. A bargain is struck; the old woman is mistressed; and she who has mistressed her betakes herself off. Her story is settled for her the moment she is gone. She has been seen to be old herself, and ugly; large, vulgar, cross; with greased hair curled rigidly round her kitchen-face; with her angrily-nodding head crowned with a bonnet all lace, and feathers, and flowers; with her bulky figure bedizened out with every button, and fringe, and bugle that could find an inch on which to hang; and the ladies are sure she is the jealous and rich old wife of a lively and poor young man, irritated at every look he casts on other women, and afraid of her life to have a comely handmaid near her, on his account. So, both prudence and the desire for personal aggrandisement, by contrast, combine to make her secure the services of the poor withered hag: she will look plump and attractive by the side of her, at anyrate.

A vivacious dialogue, ending in a piece of loud amusement, is occasioned by the next labourer who comes. She is a blunt, big-headed, little thing; black in hair, and eyes, and dress (as it happens, for her father is dead, she says, by and by, and she is in mourning); she is as resolute, and earnest, and outspoken as she can be, with all the determination to assert her rights, and be justly paid for work she would justly do, that is the rufflement of Conservatives, and the stand-point for the oratory of Mr Bright.

'Where were you living last?' the mistress she has fallen to ask.

Well, there is a difficulty there, the little black young person confesses. The lady had seemed a *real* lady when she had first gone to her, and had spoken so nice, and made everything seem so fair; but when she had run home to see her father after three weeks, he knew directly what sort of a lady she was, and had told her to go back at once and give a month's warning, there and then. And the lady—or the woman, the black young person had better call her, for she was no better than a woman, not a bit!—the woman had been so angry she had turned her and her boxes right out into the street. So, this being the case, the black one submitted that no character would be forthcoming from such a quarter, even supposing any lady, who *was* a lady, would like to go and get it.

'Dear me!' the listening mistress cried. And she felt such sympathy in the plainly-spoken tale, she looked at the two or three ladies on each side of her at her angle of the room (to whom she had been chatting before), inviting them to pay

attention, and have their compassion stirred as well.—'Why, that was an unfortunate affair for you! Was it long ago?'

'Little better than two months,' Miss Black answered; not abashed at the increase of her auditory at all. 'My father was took ill that night week, and was buried yesterday was three weeks; or else'—and Miss Black bridled—'or else he'd have seen me righted now!'

'And this person—this last mistress of yours,' the lady asked, glancing at her fellow-listeners, who were quite as much interested as she, 'was she very beautiful? Was she handsome? Was she young?'

'La! no'm; not a bit!' Miss Black cried. 'She was just such another as you!'

And so the laugh came not quite where the mistress expected it, and the thing goes on. A slovenly, drab-dressed, beetle-browed young woman enters, who declares she left her place for no other reason than that she and another were obliged to sleep in a bed not big enough for one. A plump, pleasant, cheerful-looking girl comes, who is picked up forthwith, although the mistress, sitting next to the one who has engaged her, says—after she is gone, and is entirely out of hearing—that fat girls are not worth much; and she shall wonder if this one can stir about at all. A black-haired, white-skinned young woman comes, with a sharp voice and a keen eye, who falls to the lot of the mistress who does not approve of fat; of which latter the remark is made—after she is out of hearing—that she has got hold of a 'slammer' and a 'banger' at anyrate, and that perhaps she will be sorry she has chosen nerve instead of flesh. Then a wee, energetic young woman comes, who undertakes any amount of hard work proposed to her, as if she were a steam-engine that could never wear out; and a tall, big-boned edifice of a woman succeeds to her, who limits her labours to the narrowest possible span, saying she can neither lift much nor wash much, nor carry heavy things up and down stairs—and both of these two, widely different as they are, find a market for their toil. And then there comes a mere doll, a thing of thirteen or fourteen years old, still in child's frocks even, but who nevertheless has an ambitious soul, and who has taken to the occupation that means bread and progress to her, as a painter takes to painting, and as a hero takes to war, and who goes the round of all the ladies fruitlessly, but undismayed; and a minute or two after, comes a woman who is insinuating, and another who is bold, and a woman with a squint, and one who is a little lame. And many, many more stream in till the hour draws near when the office closes, and then the rooms become more thinly tenanted, and at last are empty, and the doors are shut.

The mistresses, as have been seen, are not idle all this while; that is to say, they do not confine their operations to questioning the young women who are sent in to them, and to answering questions in their turn. Their glances at one another had been suspicious and depreciatory enough, when they had first, one by one, assembled; but one little touch of nature after another having proved their kinship, before the *stance* was a quarter over, they had got on to confidential talk. They manage it quietly, of course—otherwise, the 'enemy,' being questioned and cross-questioned only a chair or two off, would overhear—and they form up into knots of twos and threes, leaving

some luckless middle-women without a neighbourhood to talk to; and so, in spite of their outraged tongues and ears, unlistening and dumb. But they have begun; and mistresses who are short and sharp, tell of their brisk encounters, their hot engagements, where every shot they launched did sanguinary execution, and the enemy had not a leg left on which to stand; and mistresses who are large and lofty, relate the bombarding their heavy artillery accomplished, and the submission and abject quivering they were rewarded with at every bomb.

There is every variety of mistress here to tell or hear a tale. There is the languid lady, who looks incredulous at the prowess of her communicatrix, and crushes her with the insinuation, that such conflicts are very low. There is the timid lady, who would relate fierce battles if she could, but who is obliged to sigh out stories of where she has been the dupe instead. There is the resolute lady, who would like to see the servant who could get over her, and who plainly tells her hearers, that if they give way to such absurdities as pity, tenderness, or trust, they must expect to be cheated, and have only themselves to blame. And there is the methodical lady, who has gone to work in good counting-house, ledger-and-file sort of way with her domestics, and could shew her impressed audience a book wherein every maid who has ever lived with her is entered, and where their faults and virtues remain for ever in white and black. And a lady with a fur tippet gives her experience; and another in widow's weeds; and another, with a deep voice; and a fourth, who has scarcely any voice at all; and a fifth, who enjoys supreme attention, because her maternal life has extended over so long a period—she has one son twenty-one years of age, and another who is yet at the breast. One wonders as all this *causerie* goes on, and as a glimpse is had of the silent sitting of the maids through the open door, whether, if these maids could hear the confidences of the mistresses, and these mistresses could hear the confidences of the maids, some method might not be hit upon from which good could come. The two orders now have their hands on each other's throats. They are unmitigatingly opposed. Can nothing be done to turn them into friends? What does the one side ask for? and what are the demands of the other? The battle has waged long enough now for by-standing nations to step in, and see what can be effected by negotiation. There are many Helens in the *casus belli* here; and if one were worth the blood that streamed for her, how much arbitration might be expended for all these thousands more?

The registration-office—like all other big and brave institutions—has its humble models. In some of the back-streets of the metropolis exist cheaper means still of getting wants supplied. Slips of paper, written upon by the wanters themselves, are pasted up in small shop-windows, for the low charge of sixpence or a shilling, where the wants they mention may be read by the passers-by. They present a suggestive page of reading, expressing as they do the requirements of the people who live round about—of the people who inhabit the crowded houses where there is a family in every room, where even the front and back kitchens have their several lodgers, where the front doors are perforated by an almost telegraphic system of wires and bells—they may be expected to reveal

curious phases of human life, and certainly they do. 'Wanted a good *grenal* servant,' one of these notices said, as badly written as badly spelled; and the notice ended, 'Ring the top bell'—the whole affair bearing marks upon it of the poverty that could not afford servant-keeping at all. 'Charing wanted,' another notice read, 'by a *respectable* young person;' with as much overturn to our notions of the orthodox age of a charwoman as of the unexpected appearance of the letter *k*. 'Lodging for a *respectable* young lady,' was written on another piece of paper; the respectable young lady's lodging being of such complex locality the applicants were asked to 'please to ring the left-hand bell.' 'Lodgings for single women employed out during the day,' another notice read—a Box and Cox arrangement that might become as farcical as its forerunner, had not the Mrs Bouncer of the *affichement* guarded herself against undue surprise by the request for all persons to 'knock three times.' Opposed to this, a *Yong* girl was wanted a little further on 'to sleep at her own home;' and on another paper was written, 'Elderly Female wanted to sit up at nights with a male invalid; ring first-floor bell;' so that the conditions are brought before us of places where sleep can be obtained, but where the sleepers must go out to work; of places where work is to be done, but the workers must go out to sleep; and—to finish up the story—of places where the work entails no sleeping to be done at all.

One lady writing down her wants in this unpretending way is very explicit; she desired to be 'housekeeper to a *widow's* tradesman.' Another paper asked for 'a clean, respectable person to make tea and attend to the domestic arrangements for the young ladies in a house of *business*.' 'Wanted,' said another notice, with quite a *vivace* infringement of ordinary rules, 'a Woman for the Hair knotting and panting making, and a girl to Learn the *business*, and also Hand for the Human Hair Foundation;' and as bewildering as this was the demand for 'good body-hands,' and for 'hands to dressing-gowns,' and a 'good maker-up.' The wish for a 'Tambour-hand' sounds mysterious also, but it is merely the name of one of the many subdivisions of needlewomen's labour, and is flanked by invitations to Trouser-hands, Coat-hands, Button-hole makers, Bead-workers, Muslin-bodice makers, Ball-dress trimmers, Learners at carpet-sewing, and women to work machines. 'A good *knickerbrocker* suite-hand wanted,' shews again how branches and branchlets of business are kept apart; and the addition to another notice, 'Good wages and steady work to good hands,' shews how like the British working-woman is to her husband the British working-man in wanting the groove she is to tread dug very deep before her, or else she will become erratic, and take to straying away. But there is one thing that may be said to allay wonderment at this curious straying away: has subdivision of labour been carried just one stroke too far? Has this departmental cutting-up, that brings beautiful proficiency, prevented adherence to labour, and caused that fast-and-loose toiling that keeps so many people poor? This irregularity of employment, this hatred of continuous hours and method, is the bane of the mass of working-people, it is true; but, in the case of women, imagine days, months, years spent in making button-holes! Think of waking up in the room that is only ours to sleep in, and in which we have no right to stay

to work, and of going off somewhere else to do nothing else than sew on beads! Is it a wonder that we should irk after months of it, and say: 'I can't sew beads on any more to-day. I'll stroll about the streets (I can't stay in my own room, you know—it is only mine to sleep!). I will keep away from those horrid bits of glass, if it is only to loll and lounge!' It is unpleasant to see troops of listless girls and women in the streets, with no business to keep them there; but pity on them, instead of upturned eyes—pity as wide and deep as pity can be found. They have as many wants and ungratified desires as caressed and better-regulated girls, and they have so much more difficulty in getting their wants supplied! It is well to know some one or two of the ways work is asked for and obtained, if it only makes us think of this.

CONVOCACTION.

At the same time that parliament is summoned to meet for the dispatch of business, notice is sent to the members of a body called Convocation to meet also. Not unfrequently, the members of Convocation represent the famous twenty thousand men with which the king of France went up a hill, and then—came down again. They meet, but are commonly prorogued by the Queen's proctor as soon as they proceed to business, or rather, as soon as they attempt to proceed to business, for action they can take none without the consent of parliament and the sovereign. Sometimes it is permitted to them to have a long session; but these occasions are rare, and never present themselves unless there be some questions to be discussed on which the sovereign wishes to have the opinion of Convocation. More often than not, the assembly is prorogued a few days after the date of meeting, and is not summoned till the next session of parliament.

Yet the assembly would at first sight appear to be an important one, consisting as it does of representatives of all the clergy within the bounds of the ecclesiastical province of Canterbury. There is also a Convocation of the clergy of the province of York; but it is much smaller, and does not often meet. The body which is called *par excellence* Convocation is that of the assembled clergy of the province of Canterbury. It consists of an Upper and a Lower House, sitting at Westminster, and is presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose duty it is, on receipt of the sovereign's writ, to summon the members. The Upper House includes the archbishop and the bishops of the province; the Lower House includes deans, archdeacons, one proctor for each of the cathedral chapters, and two proctors for the beneficed clergy in each of the sees of the province. The Convocation of the province of York consists of only one House.

With such elements, the two Houses of Convocation might seem to be important features in the body politic, and to be powerful for good or for evil in all that concerns the church. Undoubtedly, they would be so if they were left to act as they please, if they were allowed to discuss and legislate like the House of Commons, even though their influence were restricted in its operation to the clergy. It is precisely for this very reason that Convocation is not allowed to proceed to active business; that the sovereign, who

might be supposed to be bound to summon them through force of custom, exercises his undoubted right to prorogue them whenever he may see fit; and he always sees fit to exercise this right as soon as the bishops and clergy are getting used to the sound of their own voices in the halls where they meet. The two Houses are permitted for a while to assist at a sort of church parliament, and as soon as they begin to work, 'that two-handed engine at the door'—if the Queen's proctor may be so called without disrespect—comes in, and sends them all away.

There cannot be any legal ground of complaint about this on the part of Convocation, for they exist only for the purpose of giving advice when the king wants it; and if the king does not want it, why should he be obliged to receive it? It is possible they may feel aggrieved—that is to say, individually hurt—because their advice is not more frequently asked for; but on such a point, the feelings of the advisers of the crown are not very sensitive. The fact is, the church as an adjunct to the state is already fully represented in the House of Lords. There is not any occasion to ask Convocation for money; and as the spiritual courts are administered by lawyers, appointed by and responsible to the crown, there is absolutely no need for the existence of the church parliament, other than that which may arise from the wish of the head of the church, who is the king, to ask advice from the clergy through their representatives.

It might be said that to Convocation ought to be committed the guidance of the church which is established by the state; that questions which are mooted in smaller spiritual spheres—the soundness or otherwise of certain teaching—the fitness or unfitness of certain practices, might be decided there, as in a council of all the talents; that to it an appeal should lie from the decisions of the ecclesiastical courts, just as appeals lie from the decisions of the superior courts of law and equity to the House of Lords. Much might be said in support of the argument, if the law of the Church of England were an unwritten, unascertainable law, which had to be made according to circumstances as they presented themselves, and depended upon the view which the heads of the church for the time being took of any debatable question of faith. It would only be on matters of undefined faith that they would have any *locus standi* as judges, for it is evident that mere questions of law could be better decided by lawyers than by clergymen. But the faith of the Church of England having been already ascertained and enshrined in certain articles and canons, there is no room for the interposition of a new spiritual code akin to that which the pope of Rome evolves from time to time out of his own mental consciousness, and which could scarcely be moulded with any real fairness or strict propriety in an assembly which is peculiarly liable to be swayed by party passion, or by emotions which must necessarily be wanting in judicial calmness and impartiality. On great questions which are beside the law, and which spring up now and again to the division of churchmen among themselves, Convocation is still free to offer its opinion when occasion requires, and for so doing the sovereign is sometimes willing to give it opportunity. But what can be the use of an assembly coming to resolutions which it has not the power to carry out? Why should it be subjected to the inconvenience, not to say indignity,

of making decrees which are not binding on anybody unless he volunteer obedience? and even then the promise to obey is one of those contracts which the law will not give its assistance to have executed. Why not, then, give Convocation power to enforce its own original decrees on matters of faith? Why not permit it to make canons which shall have the force of law? Surely, men whose business it has been to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest all the principles and precepts of the faith, might be supposed to be most fit to frame rules for the guidance of others therein. But experience is a better guide than conjecture, and experience forbids the grant of any such liberty of action to the church parliament. Let us see what the lesson of experience has been, and see also more precisely the actual position of the church parliament with reference to the state.

Originally—that is to say, before Edward I.—the English church synods or councils differed in no respect from those in continental countries, and consisted of bishops only. They were assembled by command of the bishop of the diocese, or the archbishop of the province, according as they were meant to be diocesan or provincial councils. The greater of these could make canons, declare the faith, take cognizance of error, and even hear appeals from the spiritual courts on questions affecting marriage, testaments, and matters of conscience. The canons they propounded were binding on the laity as well as the clergy; and they also voted such supplies as the clergy should give the king. For a long time, it was disputed whether the clergy should be bound to contribute anything as of right towards the expenses of the state; but the ecclesiastical property having been seized by way of answer to a threat of excommunication in case of the king's persistence in demanding money, the clergy yielded so far as to make grants, but stipulated that they should tax themselves. Upon this, Edward I., the founder—involuntarily, perhaps—of the representative system in parliament, declared, that if the vote of Convocation was to bind the inferior clergy as well as the bishops, the inferior clergy ought to be represented; and he established the institution on pretty much the same basis it has rested on since, though its power was then far greater—it became an ecclesiastical parliament, to make laws, and to tax the possessions of the church.

The clergy were nevertheless very uneasy about the royal interference with their rights. They held out about the right of summons, averring that they could not recognise the right of the king to assemble them, though they perforce acknowledged the existence of such a right in their primate, or even in their bishop. So, in order to save their dignity, it was arranged that the king should not send writs of summons to the members of Convocation, but a general precept to the archbishop, to whom they paid ready obedience, and who, it was understood, was not to come foul of the king by refusing compliance with his writ. The clergy reserved to themselves the right to meet in convocation whenever they pleased, without reference to the king's order, and they acted on this reservation, and did meet from time to time for the transaction of ecclesiastical business. They made canons, declared heresies, heard appeals, and exercised a general control over the church. But they had to trust to the powers of the ecclesiastical courts, and to the terrors of ecclesiastical censures and excommunications for

the execution of their decrees; and this power they found, by the time Wicliffe appeared, to be insufficient for their purpose. They procured from Richard II. the assistance of the secular arm, so as to enable them to imprison heretics, until they should purge themselves of heresy; and from Henry IV. they purchased, as the price of their support to his bad title, the infamous Statute of Heresy, by which persons convicted of heresy by the spiritual courts were to be burned, in cases of obstinacy, by the sheriff.

So things remained till the time of Henry VIII.; and then the power of Convocation, with all its inquisitorial tendencies, was broken. By the 25 Henry VIII. c. 19, called the Act of Submission, the right of Convocation to meet without the royal summons was expressly renounced; all canons made without the royal assent were declared to be worthless; and even after the Convocation had met, it was provided that they should not confer for the purpose of framing canons without express authority from the king; and no canons, though agreed to, were to be binding, if they were in contravention of the royal prerogative, or were contrary to the common or the statute law of the land. Canons which might be made under all these restrictions, were still not to bind the laity, unless they received the sanction of both Houses of Parliament. It rested therefore with the king to say whether Convocation should meet at all; and having met, whether it should be a synod, or merely a clerical council to vote the taxes on the clergy. Its appellate jurisdiction was also taken away by the statute which declared the king to be head of the church, and so gave suitors or defendants in ecclesiastical causes a right of final appeal to him. Henry, as a set-off to these annihilating regulations, accorded the same privileges to members of Convocation and their families and servants as members of parliament enjoy.

To insure due recognition of the power and authority of this assembly, it is provided by canon No. 139, which has been approved by parliament, that 'Whosoever shall affirm that the sacred synod of this nation, in the name of Christ, and by the king's authority assembled, is not the true Church of England by representation, let him be excommunicated, and not restored until he repent, and publicly revoke that his wicked error.' This punishment is repeated at the end of a string of canons, reminding one of the sanctions attached to the Articles of War, where, however, the common sentence of 'death' is relieved in most cases by the saving-clause, which does not appear in the ecclesiastical code, 'or such other punishment as by a general court-martial shall be awarded.' A sentence of excommunication, be it observed, may even now a days—supposing it could be obtained from a competent tribunal—be enforced if the sovereign sees fit, by imprisonment for six months; but no civil disabilities follow; and he would be a curious object of interest who would seek from any of her Majesty's judges a writ of *capias* against an excommunicated person.

The Act of Uniformity in 1661 was the child of Convocation. In 1663, the assembly voted supplies for the last time; for by a private agreement between Archbishop Sheldon and Lord Clarendon, which has since been recognised by two acts of parliament, the clergy gave up their right to tax themselves, and accepted in lieu the right to vote for members of parliament. 'This,' says Burn,

'both made convocations unnecessary to the crown, and inconsiderable in themselves.' From the date of this arrangement till the year 1700, Convocation was summoned, but rarely met. During Queen Anne's reign, the two Houses of Convocation quarrelled vehemently on absurd subjects, quite beside those most important to the church; they disputed on such points as whether dissenters were to be rebaptised on entering the Church of England, and did not concern themselves about the great spiritual needs of the age. In 1717, after waxing very wroth over what was known as the Bangorian Controversy, in which certain opinions expressed by Dr Hoadley, Bishop of Bangor, came in question, the two Houses were prorogued, and have never since been allowed to sit for the dispatch of business.

Burke, in his letter to the sheriffs of Bristol, says: 'We know that the Convocation of the clergy had formerly been called, and sat with nearly as much regularity to business as parliament itself. It is now called for form only. It sits for the purpose of making some polite ecclesiastical compliments to the king; and when that grace is said, retires, and is heard of no more. It is, however, a part of the constitution, and may be called out into act and energy whenever there is occasion, and whenever those who conjure up that spirit will choose to abide the consequence.'

A DUEL IN THE DARK.

'I CALL IT,' said my friend, Monsieur Hippolyte Gerfaut, commissary of police of the city of Paris, in his perfectly accented English, 'I call it my duel in the dark. The *affaire Chardon* was *bizarre* enough to create some little sensation at the time, even among our *blasts* Parisians; though, doubtless, it is long since forgotten. I have two satisfactory reasons for remembering it—I who had the entire conduct of it; first, because my adversary was *un homme fort*—a *gaillard* whom it was no small credit to defeat; secondly, because I was fortunate enough to be able to prove to my superiors, who were till then inclined to treat them more lightly than they deserved, that certain little theories of mine *avaient du bon*. We have our *amour-propre*, *nous autres*, you see. If you think the story will serve to lighten an hour of this long journey, here it is.'

And while the Marseille express rushed Pariswards through the howling darkness of that wild November night, Monsieur Gerfaut pulled his fur *casquette* over the sharp black eyes, that gleamed and twinkled behind his official *lunettes*, arranged his travelling-wraps, refreshed himself with a pinch of snuff, and told me his story, as nearly as I can remember, in the following fashion.

'The facts of the case,' said the *commissaire*, 'as it was brought before me, in the first instance, were these. Just six years ago, a young provincial notary, Léopold Chardon by name, arrived in Paris with his wife, a bride of some three weeks, to spend the remainder of their honeymoon. Chardon had but lately succeeded his old patron, the notary Lamorce, at Morville; and it was the latter who, knowing to a centime the amount of Mademoiselle

Blanche Ségouvay's *dot*, and having a prudent eye to the early payment of the purchase-money of his *étude*, had arranged the match between the two young people. It promised to be a very happy one. Every one at Morville knew that Léopold Chardon and his *future* simply adored each other.

'Well, they were married. It had been settled long previously that they were to start for Paris immediately after the ceremony; and Mademoiselle Blanche had raised no objection to this plan. Strange, you will say, if she had objected to a month's sojourn in the women's Paradise. Nevertheless, at the last moment, Madame Chardon evinced a most decided repugnance to undertake the journey. She either could not or would not assign any reason for this caprice—as it seemed to her husband—but that it was in Paris that her father had died; and that it would naturally be painful to her to revisit scenes associated with his memory.

'Chardon made one or two attempts to combat this morbid feeling, but unsuccessfully. He was fain to yield to it at last, and trust that it would soon wear off, as indeed it appeared to do. The young people travelled about from place to place, each day's journey bringing them nearer to the capital, till, by and by, only three or four leagues lay between it and them. When, one morning, Chardon ventured to renew his proposition, his wife accepted it with little or no hesitation. The caprice had passed, or Madame had got the better of her distressing souvenirs. On the evening of that day, Léopold Chardon and his bride were in Paris.

'In the midst of its thousand-and-one pleasures and attractions, Madame Chardon appeared to have forgotten her former objections to the visit. But her husband remembered afterwards, once upon the crowded Boulevard, and again as they sat together in the theatre, she had suddenly, and as it seemed in a sort of involuntary tremor, seized his arm, as though something or some one had startled or frightened her. She could give no explanation of this strange emotion, when he questioned her. It was the morbid feeling reasserting itself, no doubt.

'Chardon had installed his wife in the same *Hôtel garni*, in the *Pays Latin*, that he had inhabited himself as a bachelor law-student. They occupied a large room on the first floor, overlooking the gardens of the Luxembourg.

'There, one wild night in November—a night like this—when the wind was roaring among the leafless trees, and dashing the storm-drops heavily against the windows of *Numéro Ten*, the two were sitting, after witnessing the performance at the Ambigu, talking over what they had seen before retiring to rest. The room was lighted only by the feeble gleam of a *veilleuse*, and the occasional flicker of a dying fire. The clocks had chimed the three-quarters past midnight. It was the ghastly drama of the *Vampire* which had been played at the Ambigu that night, and its fantastic horrors seemed to have made so strong an impression on his wife, that Chardon rallied her laughingly on her nervousness. To no purpose. She had, she admitted, no belief in the existence of a supernatural monster. But, she asked shudderingly, were there not really assassins who murdered people in their sleep? A notion which Chardon treated with all the tranquil *insouciance* of an ex-student, and hastily turned the conversation.

'It fell at last on somnambulism and somnam-

bulists—a set of *farceurs*, the young notary observed, who played all sorts of queer pranks with the most innocent unconsciousness possible. Witness the story of the monk and his superior. The latter reading a holy book one night upon his bed, was horror-struck at beholding one of the brethren armed with a large knife enter his cell, the door of which stood open, and make straight for him with a stealthily threatening gesture. The superior slipped quietly from his couch, and, lying *perdu*, had the satisfaction of seeing Frère Anselme bury his knife three times to the hilt in what he doubtless imagined was the reverend prior's body, and then retire with a countenance expressive of rapture. The poor devil was a somnambulist, and professed the greatest astonishment and grief when told next day of what he had done in his trance. The superior pardoned poor Frère Anselme, Chardon said, as he finished his tale; but, like a wise man, fastened the door of his cubiculum for the future.

'Madame Chardon had so far recovered herself as to be able to smile faintly again by this time. All at once, as though struck with a thought, she asked her husband if he had secured the door of their apartment, and if not, to do so.

'Anxious to calm and reassure her, Chardon crossed the room at once towards the door, with the intention of removing the key from the outside (where, according to our system, it acts as a door-handle), and so render the entrance of any evil-disposed person, somnambulist or otherwise, impossible. In doing so, something lying on the table at the foot of the bed, which gleamed in the expiring light of the *veilleuse*, caught his eye. Strange! it was the elaborately chased silver hilt of a large Algerian poniard which had been given him only that very day by an old comrade, an officer of Spahis, spending his leave in Paris. The sight of this weapon impressed him disagreeably. Somehow, his thoughts reverted to the monk's dagger in the story he had just told his wife; and this *bizarre* association of ideas caused him a vague, undefinable uneasiness. He felt half-tempted to put away the poniard in a drawer, to be out of sight; but he feared if he did so, Blanche might question him—that he might only make her more nervous than she was already, if he let her suppose he had experienced a similarly absurd disquiet.

'Just then, a sudden draught caused the *veilleuse* to go out altogether. This decided him. In a very short time both the occupants of Numéro Ten were fast asleep.

'How long that sleep had lasted, Léopold Chardon never knew. It was still utterly dark in the room when he awoke—awoke with a faint sickly odour in his nostrils, that carelessly courageous as he was, brought a sweat of terror upon his forehead. He knew it instinctively—instinctively, too, he stretched forth his hand to where his wife lay beside him. A low cry burst from his pale lips. His hand was wet with something heavy, and viscid, and lukewarm, which could only be one horrible thing: his hand was wet with blood. He sprang from the bed to his feet. The blackness and the silence of the grave was all around him. Gasping for air, like one half-suffocated, he groped his way to the window, and flung it open. In a little while, he felt so far recovered as to be able to persuade himself that he must be the victim of some atrocious nightmare—superinduced, no doubt, by the drama he had witnessed at the Ambigu, and his conversation with his wife afterwards. Yes;

that was all. To convince himself, he kindled a taper, and shielding it from the current of air that blew in through the window, advanced resolutely to the bedside, prepared to smile at his own folly when he should see his Blanche slumbering peacefully. With a steady hand, he drew back the curtains, and this is what he saw: he saw his wife lying still enough upon her pillows, her eyes wide open, and fixed in a ghastly stare—her fair hair all dishevelled and dabbled in blood—in blood, for planted in her heart was the Algerian poniard he had left upon the table. A sudden gust extinguished the taper, and the room was in darkness once more. Alone with the corpse of his murdered wife, Chardon felt for a while nothing but a dull sense of numbing oppression, that paralysed every mental faculty. But when the gray light of the dreary November dawn stole upon him, the horrible reality of what had happened seemed suddenly to strike him. There, before his eyes, lay his wife, murdered in her sleep—murdered with the very weapon the sight of which had so strangely affected him a few hours ago. Who was the assassin? Was it possible that any one could have entered the room and dealt that death-blow, and yet never have disturbed him? Impossible. Even supposing it were so, could he believe that his innocent Blanche had so deadly a foe? Impossible, again. And it was no robber's doing; for there, on the table, where the poniard had lain, lay untouched still a considerable sum in gold. Who, then, had done it? Presently, an appalling idea occurred to him. What if it were himself? What if, still under the influence of the involuntary thoughts which had so strangely disquieted him when he retired to rest, he had risen in his sleep, taken the dagger from its place, and in his unconscious sleep still, become the unwitting assassin of his wife?

'It was a terrible hypothesis; but it seemed to him the only reasonable one. He must have played the part of Frère Anselme in the story he had told the night before. Yes; but the monk might have really hated his superior, while he passionately loved his victim. Would not that love have availed to keep him, even in an access of somnambulism, from doing harm to her? Surely. But then, who *could* have done this but himself? The more he thought of it, the more certain it seemed to him that he was the innocent perpetrator of this crime. What was he to do? Hide the body, and make his escape while there was yet time? In other words, act as though he were really an assassin? The thought was revolting. Besides, it might be—he knew not how, indeed—but it might be that he was innocent in deed as he was in thought; that there was a real criminal. In this case he must be found—justice must find him; and in the hands of justice, Chardon decided to place himself.

'He dressed hastily, and went out. At the end of the first street, he saw the red light which marks our police stations yet burning before a house. He made for it without hesitation, rang the bell, and asked to see the commissaire on a pressing matter. That official's servant noticing something strange on the face of the unseasonable visitor, shewed him into a waiting-room at once, and turning the key noiselessly upon him, hurried off to awake his master.—In another five minutes, said Monsieur Gerfaut, refreshing himself at this point of his story with a liberal allowance of his favourite stimulant—in another five minutes, Léopold

Chardon and I stood face to face, and my part in the drama may be said to have commenced.

‘He told me what I have told you, with a clearness and minuteness of detail that at first sight seemed suspicious. It is the business of *nous autres* to suspect everything, you know; and his looked not a little like a preconcerted account—a *rôle* got by heart. I listened to my man without a word of interruption, watching his face narrowly all the time he was speaking from under my invaluable lunettes. When he had finished, I put to him one or two of those questions in which an unwary criminal finds loopholes for retraction or specious explanation. Chardon made no attempt at either.

‘Notably, when I suggested to him that he might perhaps have left the key of his apartment in the door, in which case any one might have entered the room, his answer was, that it might have been so, but that he could not be sure whether he had withdrawn the key or not. He had certainly removed it, but, preoccupied with the strange thoughts which the sight of the poniard had so unaccountably awakened in him, it was quite possible that, after all, he had merely replaced it in the keyhole, where he had indeed discovered it in the morning; yet his impression was that it was not there when he went to bed.

‘I remanded the self-accused murderer into safe custody, and went off at once to inspect the scene of the crime. After a careful examination of Numéro Ten, I caused the door of the apartment to be sealed up in my presence, and announced, in the hearing of a group of *badauds* who had already assembled, that the removal of the body of the murdered woman would take place at nine o'clock on the following morning.

‘My next step was to call on a physician of my acquaintance, and request him to examine my prisoner's state of mind. That afternoon, we visited Chardon together. He was far more unnerved and excited than he had been when he surrendered himself; but, nevertheless, he repeated quite clearly and consistently his former statement, with this important addition, that, on being asked if his late wife had ever evinced a disinclination to come to Paris, he told me that she had; and, further, in reply to another question, that she had evinced some symptoms of a sudden terror, for which she had invariably refused to account.

‘On leaving the room where the prisoner was confined, I asked my friend, the physician, his opinion on the case. Was Léopold Chardon a somnambulist, and had he, as he himself believed, killed his wife in a sudden access of his malady? or was he simply a remarkably clever villain?

‘My scientific friend inclined to neither opinion. Somehow, the prisoner's tone and manner had already convinced him—as, I confess, they had done me—that, in intention at least, Léopold Chardon was as innocent as ourselves of this murder. “And if,” said my friend, “he killed his wife in an access of somnambulism, we shall know to-night, perhaps. The impression on his mind of what has occurred is so strong, that, if he sleeps at all, he must infallibly betray himself.”

‘That night, through a Judas-hole in the wall, the doctor and I watched Chardon in his sleep, for he did sleep, though restlessly. Half-an-hour after midnight, his restlessness seemed to increase; at last he glided stealthily from the bed, and, like one in a trance, stole softly across the room to where a poniard had been designedly left upon the table.

‘The experiment was growing interesting.

‘We saw the somnambulist clutch the poniard, and creep back cautiously to the bed—saw him pass his hand over the bed-clothes, as though to assure himself his victim was there—saw the steel gleam as he raised his hand to deal the blow; and then saw him fling away his weapon, and bursting into an hysterical fit of weeping, fall senseless upon the floor.

‘“You see,” said the doctor, “he *could* not have killed his wife, this man. And this is no acting, either. *On n'est pas comédien à ce point-là!* No one could have gone through that scene so naturally, if he had been merely playing it. Léopold Chardon is as innocent of this crime as you or I.”

‘“And the real criminal,” I said, “who is he?”

‘“Ah, *mon cher*,” the doctor said, as he went away, “that's your affair. You must find him!”

‘My friend was right. Believing the self-accused criminal to be innocent, as I did, it was my business to discover the real one. The affair interested me for several reasons—its extraordinary nature, the impenetrable mystery in which it seemed to be involved, the many difficulties that were in my way, and last, though not least, the opportunity it appeared likely to afford me of putting into practice those little theories of inductive ratiocination of which I was so fond.

‘I set to work that very night by putting together what I had heard from my prisoner; and sketching out mentally the sort of individual the actual assassin of Madame Chardon might be. Evidently, some one who knew and was known to her, and who knew, but was unknown to her husband. Some one, probably, who had entertained a passion for her, to which she had refused to respond, and whose jealousy had prompted him to this terrible revenge.

‘This person resided, at all events habitually, in Paris. This would account for the repugnance Madame Chardon had evinced to visit the capital, where she might run the risk of meeting him; and she had met him. Hence her sudden alarm on those two occasions which her husband had remarked; her unwillingness to encounter my ideal assassin, and her terror when she did encounter him, added to the presentiment of coming evil which she indubitably felt, and the shuddering question she had, under the influence of this presentiment, put to her husband on the night of, and only a few hours before, the murder: Were there not murderers who stabbed one in one's sleep? All this furnished me with pretty trustworthy data for a character-portrait of the man I should have to look for, and between whom and myself, from the moment I was convinced of Léopold Chardon's innocence, a duel in the dark had begun—a man whom the repulse of his passion had converted into a fiend; who had coolly planned and deliberately executed a deed which at once glutted his vengeance on husband and wife, and was intended to insure his own safety; for, Chardon found guilty of the murder on his trial, the actual assassin had nothing to fear. Now, I argued from this, that this actual assassin was, in the first place, not a young man. A young lover would have hardly been likely to be vindictively jealous of a husband, and he would be still less likely to harm the wife.

‘The assassin of Madame Chardon, then, I believed to be a man somewhat past middle age—the period when I hold the passion that had

mastered him to be at its strongest and deadliest. In the second place, I believed him to be a man of sedentary and solitary habits, since such morbid frenzy, as I concluded he was possessed by, would have been dissipated by an active life, or one spent much in society. Whoever he was, he was worth finding; and wherever he was, found I determined he should be.

'I half anticipated meeting him the next morning. It was not without design that I had made that public announcement as to the time when the body of the murdered woman would be removed from the Hôtel Garni. You know, perhaps, as well as I how irresistible is the impulse which impels most criminals to revisit, to haunt, the scene of their crime; and I had accordingly calculated that among the crowd of idlers and curious sure to assemble on such an occasion, I might expect to find the man I was in search of. Well, the morning came, and I was disappointed. No one in the least answering to my ideal portrait of the assassin met my eye in the group of *badauds* that hung about the hôtel entrance while the corpse was being taken away.

'So much the better, I thought. My man was evidently wary. The duel in the dark between us had fairly commenced. It seemed my antagonist was likely to prove worthy of my steel. Our meeting must be postponed to the day fixed for the trial of the self-accused murderer.

'I argued in this way: The real criminal, whoever he is, has had self-command enough to keep away for the present. He is afraid his face might betray him to one of us. Besides, he most likely knows that the husband of his victim is in custody, and that so far he is safe; but he must naturally feel the keenest interest in the trial that is to follow, since, if the supposed assassin is condemned, the veritable one may consider himself secure; while, on the other hand, the acquittal of Chardon leaves the chance of his own detection always open. He will then almost certainly be present at the trial, first, because he will imagine that he runs less risk whatever emotion he may display in a large crowd, where all display emotion more or less; secondly, because it will be impossible for him to wait for the newspaper reports of a case which concerns him so intimately, when he can so easily, and as he will persuade himself, so safely, hear and see all in person. It is, then, among the spectators at the trial of Léopold Chardon that this man must be looked for. Whether my argument was sound or not, you will see directly.

'The morning of the trial came at last. I had requested and obtained permission not to be summoned as a witness, as it was most important for the end I had in view that I should not be known to the man I was looking for in my official capacity. Accordingly, dressed *en bourgeois*, I took up my position in the court a little before the trial commenced, so that I could, without attracting notice myself, study the countenances of most of the spectators.

'It was some time before even a decent resemblance to my ideal portrait met my eyes, and I had almost begun to fear that I was to be disappointed a second time, when, in the middle of the front row in the gallery, I fancied I had at last got sight of the man I was in quest of. There sat an individual whose figure was completely shrouded in a long sombre cloak, but whose face wore an expression of stealthily eager interest in the pro-

ceedings, which struck me at once as being different to that I marked on other faces about him. He answered, moreover, so exactly to the notion I had formed of the real criminal in point of age and physiognomy, that, after watching him carefully for some time, I experienced a very strong conviction that I was on the right scent—not, perhaps, so much from that look upon his face, as from something else, which, to my practised eye, betrayed his emotion even more unmistakably. The long cloak in which he was enveloped had opened a little, unknown to him, in front, and his hands, which he imagined were concealed under it, were visible; and the long, cruel-looking fingers of these hands were twisting and twining round each other convulsively. That, I thought, was suspicious, for it struck me that nothing but the strongest personal interest was likely to cause such a man as this to manifest such strange emotion; and I could perfectly well explain to myself the cause of this absorbing personal interest in the case of the real assassin of Madame Chardon.

'The question was—Was the man in the cloak the real assassin or not? I set about solving that question, as you may imagine, without loss of time. The trial lasted two whole days. The first was occupied by the official prosecutor, who stated the case, commented on the evidence furnished against himself by the accused, and ended by calling on the court to express their conviction of the transparent fallacy of the defence set up—namely, that the crime had been committed in an access of somnambulism—by finding the prisoner guilty without extenuating circumstances.

'This harangue seemed to tell very strongly against the prisoner; and I was positive that I detected signs of relief and satisfaction on the countenance of the man in the cloak when he left the gallery on the termination of the proceedings. One of my subalterns was forthwith instructed to keep an eye upon him, find out what he could about him, and report to me in person.

'I learned next morning that my *suspect* was an *ex-avoué*, by name Darrouc, and that he lived in a retired street in the Marais. When the court reopened, Monsieur Darrouc was among the first to take his seat in the gallery, but not the seat he had occupied on the previous day. This time, I was enchanted to find he chose a much less conspicuous position, on a back bench; for I explained this retiring modesty on the part of Monsieur Darrouc by concluding that he felt what was to take place to-day would be far more trying to his powers of self-command than what had already taken place, and that he was prudently anxious to avoid observation as much as possible. By and by, I entered the gallery in my turn, in a fresh costume, and looking ten years older than I had done before, and seated myself quietly beside the man in the cloak.

'As the trial proceeded, and especially when any point was strongly and eloquently urged in favour of the accused by his advocate, I remarked how, notwithstanding all his wariness and self-control, signs of an uneasiness amounting to positive alarm were betrayed by my neighbour. But while the court had retired to consider their decision, Monsieur Darrouc's livid paleness quite justified my politely asking him whether the close atmosphere of the crowded gallery had caused him to feel indisposed.

'I was delighted to hear Monsieur Darrouc answer impatiently in the negative, and to see him

draw himself suspiciously away from me. I was pretty certain of my man, and flattered myself that the assassin of Madame Chardon and I had fairly crossed swords at length; though we were fighting each other in the dark still.

'After half an hour's deliberation, the court returned a verdict of Not Guilty; and when the applause which burst forth on all sides at this announcement had been suppressed, the president, addressing the prisoner, told him that, in the opinion of his judges, no stain whatever rested on his character; that the court sympathised deeply with his misfortune, and trusted that an overruling Providence would yet bring about the discovery of the real perpetrator of this terrible and mysterious crime.

'Perhaps,' Monsieur Gerfaut interrupted himself here—'perhaps I had better grounded hopes than Monsieur le Président that this would be the case.

'Well,' he continued, 'the prisoner was then discharged. Following Monsieur Darrouc out of court, I had the good-luck to intercept the one deadly look of hate he bestowed on Chardon as the latter was hurried away in a crowd of friends, and congratulated myself afresh on this last confirmation of the truth of my little hypothesis. Moreover, it was perfectly plain to me that the concluding words of the president had been too much for Monsieur Darrouc, for he staggered rather than walked away from the scene of the trial.

'My trusty subaltern took charge of him again; and early the next morning, I set out on a little country excursion I had been planning for some time. The same evening, I arrived at Morville—the provincial town where Chardon practised—and where, I had been informed, his mother-in-law, Madame Ségouvay, yet resided.

'It was necessary, you understand, that I should know what, if any, had been the connection between Madame Chardon's family and Monsieur Darrouc.

'Unfortunately, my first inquiries informed me that Madame Ségouvay had died just four-and-twenty hours before my arrival, overwhelmed with grief at the fate of her daughter, and the terrible accusation brought against her son-in-law.

'This was an unlooked-for check. I had confidently expected to extract important information from the mother of Madame Chardon as to her daughter's former relations with the man in the cloak. It seemed I was just too late.

'There remained Monsieur Lamorce, the old notary whose *étude* Léopold Chardon had purchased. He was able to give me the name of the late Madame Ségouvay's man of business in Paris; and, as I instinctively anticipated, that individual's name was Darrouc; and he admitted, under considerable pressure, that Monsieur Darrouc was supposed to be a rejected suitor of the murdered woman's.

'This perfectly coincided with my theory, you will observe; and I returned to Paris with the positive moral certainty that the man in the cloak, and no other, was the assassin of Blanche Chardon, *née* Ségouvay. But this conviction was due to circumstances which, unless backed by more tangible proofs, would, I knew, avail but little in a court of justice. What I had to do was to procure indefeasible evidence of the guilt of Monsieur *l'ex-avoué* Darrouc.

'The duel in the dark between us two was becoming exciting. I was by this time in posses-

sion of a minutely detailed account of the habits, the resorts, and the occupations of my adversary. The man in the cloak had no friends, and very few acquaintances. It was his daily custom to walk from his retired old house in the Marais along the Quais to the Bourse. He arrived there at noon; transacted certain business, and reached home by the same route about five o'clock; dined at home, and spent his evenings reading the newspapers at a café in the immediate neighbourhood; conversed occasionally with one or two old *habitués* of the same establishment, but was in general very silent and reserved.

'Now, as there was so little chance of knowing what was passing in my adversary's mind at this time from other people, it became imperative that I should divine for myself. I therefore took measures for studying his countenance daily, which he could neither be aware of nor suspect. Every day, at certain hours, I used to post myself at the window of a small café situated on Monsieur Darrouc's line of march to and from the Bourse. By cautiously raising a little corner of the window-blind, I was able to examine the expression of his face for two or three seconds; and in this way I learned all I wanted.

'As the effect of his first fright passed away, the physiognomy of the man in the cloak gradually recovered its wonted calm. I saw that he had succeeded in quieting his fears, and was by degrees freeing himself from the apprehension that suspicion might attach to him. This grew more plainly apparent each day, till, at last, I was sure that my adversary's mind was quite easy again.

'Now was my time to make my first *coup*. Chardon had returned to Morville after his acquittal; and, as I learned, had, by dint of hard work, managed to shake off the morbid depression which the loss of his young wife and his own sufferings had produced. One morning, he received a letter from me requesting his immediate presence in Paris. That evening, he was closeted with me in my *bureau*.

'In reply to his questions, I told him that I was, I felt assured, on the track of the actual assassin of his wife; but that his aid was indispensable to my plan for bringing the criminal within the grasp of the law, and that I had sent for him to ask for it. He agreed eagerly to do all that I might require of him. There might be, I informed him, some danger, possibly; some discomfort, certainly; and what he would shrink from more than either, a cruel necessity for re-opening wounds just closed. But all would soon be over; the right man brought to justice; his own name cleared from even the shadow of a suspicion; his murdered wife avenged.

'Once more he assured me that, for this, he would shrink from nothing. What was he to do?

'Merely this, I said: to engage and occupy that night, and every night for the next week, the apartment Numéro Ten, at the Hôtel Garni, in the Quartier Latin, which he and his wife had occupied on the night the murder was committed; to walk every morning by a certain route to the Bourse; pass four or five hours there in a little harmless speculation, and return about five in the afternoon, by the same way as he went, in company with a person whom I would send to him. He promised exact compliance with my instructions, and kept his word.

'That night, he found himself once more in that fatal chamber of the little Hôtel Garni. Not

without an almost invincible repugnance, he made his preparations for passing the night there. To sleep, he felt would be impossible; and flinging himself into a *fauteuil*, he waited, a prey to sad thoughts of his lost wife, till morning came. With it arrived my trusty subaltern, who was to accompany him to the Bourse. The two walked there presently along the Quais together, and returned by the same route in the afternoon at the time I had fixed.

'I read on the disturbed countenance of Monsieur Darrone that day that the assassin of Madame Chardon had recognised, and suspected the errand of, the husband of his victim. I was quite prepared for this; but it was highly satisfactory to know that all I had anticipated was coming to pass.

'Three or four days passed. Chardon continued to carry out my directions to the letter; attended the Bourse each morning; passed each night in that hateful chamber overlooking the gardens of the Luxembourg. Nothing had happened. But my adversary's face told me something would happen before long. On the fifth night, as they lounged homewards rather later than usual, Chardon remarked to his companion, my *fidus Achates*, that for the last two nights he was certain some one had been dogging them—was creeping stealthily after them then. The other smiled, turned sharply down a cross-street, and halted.

'A man, shrouded in an ample cloak, and with his hat pulled over his eyes, passed swiftly by.

"I thought so," my agent said. "*C'est lui!*"

"Who?"

"The man we want; the assassin of your wife.—Stay!" he added, laying his hand quietly but firmly on Chardon's shoulder as the latter sprang forward with a fierce execration—"Stay! The game is in safer hands than yours, Monsieur. We are playing it for you. It is not time yet. But *soyez tranquille!* you have not long to wait. He will try it to-night, or to-morrow night at latest. Listen! You will retire to rest as usual, extinguish your light as usual, leave your key in the lock as usual, put a pistol under your pillow if you choose, and leave the rest to us. We have him at last."

'Chardon, brave as he was, shuddered. He understood. The murderer of his wife, whom he knew not, knew him; suspected his errand in Paris, and was ready to commit another crime, to secure himself from the consequences of the first. He understood now what my little plan was.

'Fortunately for its success, his courage and his resolution never failed him. At his wonted hour, he ascended to his apartment, leaving the key in the lock outside as usual, and placing, before he extinguished his light, the Algerian poniard with which Madame Chardon had been stabbed exactly in the place where it had been on the night of the murder. He had noticed, on taking his candle, that another candlestick, with a key marked No. 2 lying in it, had been prepared for some occupant of the room next his own. He could easily guess who that occupant was likely to be.

'The two apartments, No. 1 and No. 2, were reached by a short, dark corridor, and divided only by a thin partition. Opposite No. 2 was a wood-closet, built into the wall, and, as Chardon had nightly assured himself, securely locked.

'Lying motionless in his bed, his hand clutching the pistol he had placed under his pillow, he waited, listening for the footsteps that he knew

would come. Presently, he could hear them—up the stairs, along the dark corridor, past the door of his room; then the door of No. 2 was opened and closed, and Chardon could hear the muffled tread of some one pacing cautiously to and fro—that ceased, and then all was quiet—so quiet, that, as he lay there prepared for the death-grapple with his assassin, he could hear the beating of his own heart. Would it be to-night? Anything was better than this horrible suspense.

'What was that? The door of No. 2 creaked as it was gently opened again; then a stealthy tread in the corridor—and then the key of No. 1 turned softly in the lock, and Chardon knew that the murderer of his wife—the man who meant to have his life too—was standing on the threshold.

'Breathing regularly, as one in a deep sleep, the watcher drew the hand which grasped the pistol noiselessly from under the pillow. But the stealthy tread came no nearer; either the assassin's courage failed him, or he had merely wished to assure himself of the presence of his intended victim.

"It will not be till to-morrow, now;" Chardon thought, as he heard the door of the next room shut the next moment; and he guessed rightly. Nothing further occurred to disturb him; but he tossed feverishly to and fro, unable to sleep, and haunted with horrible waking dreams.

'Morning came. The day passed as usual. Again Chardon heard, as he walked this time alone along the deserted Quais back from the Bourse, the same dogging footsteps behind him.

'When he took his candle, the candle and the key of the occupant of No. 2 were on the vestibule table, as they had been the previous night.

"He will try it now," he said to himself, as pistol in hand he lay down once more upon his bed.

'No. 2 passed along the corridor to his room about midnight; and after that no sound but the careless chant of some roistering student far away in the street below broke the dead silence. All was so still, that, worn out by watching and anxiety, Chardon began to experience, despite the mortal peril he was in, an irresistible inclination to sleep.

'His head lay like lead upon his pillow. Involuntarily, his heavy eyes closed, opened once or twice, as he woke himself with a sudden start, closed again, and finally—a sleep like the sleep of death had fallen upon him.

'He never heard the door of the next room open, nor the assassin's step without, nor saw who entered his own chamber—a man whose face was livid and horribly distorted, who held a taper in his left hand, and in his right a long bright stiletto.

'Shielding the light from the sleeper's fast-closed eyes, this man crept towards the bed. On the commode at its foot lay the Algerian dagger. The murderer laid down the weapon he grasped, and clutched this, while a ghastly smile twisted his white lips. "So be it!" he muttered; "both with the same."

'A stride brought him to the bedside of his unconscious victim. He paused a moment, and then raising his right hand high, prepared to deal one sure, deadly blow. The steel gleamed in the faint light as it descended; the blow fell; but it never got home. A grasp of iron was on the murderer's wrist, another's seized his throat, and disarmed and helpless, he was flung rudely on the floor. My *fidus Achates* had him securely bound in a twinkling. At the noise, Chardon awoke.

"You may sleep on both ears for the future," I

said to him; "our friend here is not likely to trouble you any more. — *Peste ! cher Monsieur Darrouc*, you have given me some little trouble, do you know ? I have spent the last two nights in that wood-closet outside, solely on your account. But no matter. I am content to know that my little theory has proved correct, and that the mystery of the *affaires Chardon* is satisfactorily solved at last."

'And that,' said Monsieur Gerfaut in conclusion — 'that was my duel in the dark. I hope I may flatter myself it has kept you awake for the last half hour. You will sleep all the sounder presently, for here we are at Lyon, where I descend. Adieu, *très-cher ! Bon voyage !*'

HISTORIC METEORS.

THE great luminaries in the firmament of history shine with a light purely brilliant, as when good deeds illumine a great name; or lurid, as when violence and tyranny, the lust of conquest, and ruthlessness of heart tinge the radiance of supreme dignity with the hue of blood; or their radiance gleams out with a solemn sadness from the surrounding night of sorrow and misfortune, when even as their splendour has been their woe. High, lonely, and apart, they meet our upward gaze, and we read a settled lesson in their shining. And the lesser luminaries, the 'meaner beauties' of the historic skies, those whose brilliance is that of satellites—they are not less worthy of contemplation, for they are often more suggestive and more sad. Again, the meteor-lights of history, shooting from obscurity across the face of the glittering heavens, wild, startling, rapid, glorious, and brief, a brilliant moment and no more; do we not follow the flash of their career, rushing in their might and their beauty into nothingness, with somewhat of the startled admiration and the regret with which, on nights when all the pageantry of the heavens is arrayed, and the wind-ushers have withdrawn the cloud curtains, and the planets we see hold their court for a moment almost too brief for sight, a shooting-star gleaming, then quenched in the limitless space.

The historical portrait-galleries of France serve to represent this ideal firmament to the mind of the gazer. The halls of the Louvre are peopled with the phantoms of the Valois—the chambers of the Luxembourg are storehouses for the memory of the Florentine Medici and their minions—Fontainebleau sends whispers of diplomacy and love from its *allées* and its courts; formal, indeed, but with an antique and simple formality, not the mathematical magnificence, the dreary spaciousness, of Versailles, the ghost-walk of the Bourbons. What is so transient and so lasting, so ever-living and so utterly dead, as human greatness, the magnificence of kings and courtiers, the ambition of men and its prizes, the strife and the attainment of human life, as we walk through these great historical buildings, the palaces of the past, the reception-rooms of the dead? Is it more true of Egypt than of Paris, that her grandest monuments are memorial? All the stir and life, all the gaiety and glitter, all the modern fashion and newest Parisian *façons*, do not overpower the old-world air of the Palais Royal—do not turn the attention of the loiterer by the fountains and through the colonnades, from the scenes of the Revolution enacted there, from the more distant political

events which it witnessed. All the bustling, busy, brilliant crowd cannot shut out a few figures, such as Egalité, the Regent, Mazarin, and Richelieu. A little effort of memory, a little indulgence of fancy, and the Palais Cardinal is here, untouched, with all its associations of political intrigue and successful statecraft, of diplomacy of royal marriages, and skilful management of faction-interests, of unscrupulous cruelty and consummate polish. Is not the site of the palace of the Tournelles haunted ground; and St Denis, where the kings of France slept, and were shaken from their slumber by the rude hands of the mob; where the oriflamme hangs, ghostly, in the solemn gloom; where the modern world is linked to the ancient, and Christian to pagan times by the memory of Dionysius the Athenian, the first Archbishop of Paris. From St Denis to Peter the Hermit, from the Crusades to Charles the Victorious, from the days of *Jeanne la Pucelle* and *La Dame de Beauté*, when the maiden heroine of France won her fiery crown of martyrdom, and the king's mistress wore the first set of cut and polished diamonds, Jacques Cœur's invention, to the fanatical pilgrimages of the last Valois and the funeral of the last Bourbon, we are carried down the vista of time by the first glance at the famous Abbey-church, beneath which lies perhaps the most illustrious dust ever laid reverently by to mingle with its fellow-earth. There is no history so full of tragedy, none so brilliant and dazzling to the imagination, as that of France, none through which so many meteor-lights shine gloriously, to sink into such deep darkness. The sepulchres are very white, and the legends upon the tombs are resonant, and nowhere does fancy find such employment in clothing the dry bones with the valiant flesh, and the gallant trappings of the life they have laid down.

To the time of the House of Valois, as to that of our own Plantagenets and Tudors, the memory of chivalry and romance attaches in particular. The Bourbons are magnificent and dazzling in their way, and the tragic is not wanting in their history, which it pervades only a little less thoroughly than that of the Stuarts. But it is a different kind of splendour, less individual, a power more fatal to themselves in its misuse, but not so ruinous to others. The story of the House of Valois, from Francis I. to the death of Henry III., occupies an exceptional place in our imagination, as we look upon the palaces which witnessed the height of its magnificence, and the art-treasures which chronicled and flattered it. In that story, female beauty, talent, and influence shine so conspicuously that it is an exceptional period in history, the most extraordinary mingling of political and romantic intrigue on record. The women who had influenced the destinies of France before the time of Francis were of a grander and a simpler *trempe*, even when, as in the case of Agnes Sorel, their position was indefensible; the women who shed lustre and disgrace upon the Bourbons had meaner ambitions, and more entirely mercenary successes. The height to which Gabrielle d'Estrees was raised by the infatuation of the Great Henry is not more conspicuous than the failure of her attempt to reach a still higher elevation; and it does not appear that so ambitious a project as hers was ever again entertained by even the most audacious of royal favourites, until spiritual fear and bigotry having replaced, in his old age, the vices of Louis XIV.'s prime, the cold, cautious, crafty Françoise d'Aubigny became

the uncrowned queen of France. With the sole exception of Louise de la Vallière—whose story is so pitiful that the sternest cannot deny her compassion—whose repentance was so true, whose life of reparation was so admirable, that the most incredulous is forced to believe and to admire such practical penitence—there is not one figure of the brilliant procession which passes before the imagination, from Gabrielle d'Estrées, shrieking in the agonies of death, her beautiful face livid, and her mouth horribly distorted, to Madame Dubarry, on her way to the scaffold, evincing in her death a cowardice as dastardly as the licentiousness of her life had been loathsome, which has more than a momentary and surface attraction.

The great political interests, the social problems, the religious animosities of the period, all past and gone with those who strove and suffered, are faint to our perceptions; but the men and women who formed the court of the Valois kings, whom they loved and hated, who were greater, worse, more distinct than they, to whom they were faithless and fatal, keep us ghostly company under the painted ceilings in the palace chambers. The chivalrous king, with a face like a handsome satyr, was always ruled by women. We glance at the earlier years of his reign, and his mother, Louise of Savoy, comes out of the past, with her imperious temper, and her supple faithlessness, the origin of, and the excuse for, the treason of Bourbon, and the proximate cause of the loss of the Milanese. In that most romantic of historical incidents, the capture of Francis at Pavia, and his detention at Madrid, the ladies of the French court play a prominent and interesting part. We see them in their consternation and grief, in their wounded pride and helpless anger, when the news reached Paris, whereby the famous disputed apocryphal message to the queen—'Tout est perdu fors l'honneur'—or otherwise, it matters not; in the noble resolution taken by Marguerite de Valois, the king's brave, learned, devoted sister; we follow the gallant train as it sets forth, and under safe-conduct from the emperor, the *Marguerite des Marguerites* goes her way to cheer and support, to guide and counsel, her captive brother, to whom she was ever faithful and useful.

Paris saw a stirring scene that day, when the princess and her ladies, among them the Countess de Châteaubriand, heroine of so many false and tragical stories, and of one true and shameful—the woman who trafficked in military, political, and civil appointments as coolly and profitably as she defied her husband audaciously and successfully—the splendid predecessor of her who was destined to mould the character of a sovereign of France, and to rule throughout two reigns, Diana of Poitiers. Paris saw another splendid sight, when the Duchess d'Angoulême departed with her brilliant, joyous court for Bayonne, there to meet the liberated king of France, when she took with her the bride-maidens who were to embellish the loveless marriage, stipulated in the treaty of Madrid. We see and learn little of the vices of the kings of the House of Valois, with the exception of the terrible Catharine; but there is a mournful shadow always over these gloomy, proud, ignorant, unloved Austrian princesses, submissive to the arbitration of their destiny, but stubborn in the maintenance of their own habits, and never winning sympathy from, or becoming assimilated to, their new surroundings. In their lonely splendour of rank and

place, in a greatness which has only a nominal meaning, they shine with a melancholy lustre. There was much heartburning, and not a little humiliation, under the show and the bravery, for the king of France had parted with his children, the two noble boys, of whom one was never to return, on the banks of the Bidassoa; and the princes of France were hostages of Spain. That was a gallant day, when Francis rode, within its lapse, from Fontarabia to Bayonne, and danced till dawn at the revel which welcomed him; and saw for the first time the daughter of the Lord of Meudon, Mademoiselle d'Heilly. She was not beautiful, by any means; we can see her on Primaticcio's canvas, and in Jean Goujon's marble—see her prominent brow, full of intellect, her robust figure, her firm expression. A woman to rule where she was loved, and to hold power until a stronger should wrest it from her, in a desperate struggle. For her, the chivalrous king forgot everything—the safety of his kingdom, the sanctity of his word, and, above all, forgot the beautiful Countess de Châteaubriand, who did by no means die the violent and romantic death the romancers tell us of, but lived to reappear at court, when the influence of the ennobled favourite was at its height.

What a superb image presents itself to the mind as that of the Duchess d'Etampes, the patroness of letters, the protectress of the liberal party, just then struggling hard against long-established power. A strong woman—physically and mentally—full of bloom and activity, coarse, wise, prompt, and resolute, adulated by poets, courted by politicians, consulted by men of letters, with sympathetic tastes for all, but inclining, in reality, rather to the humour of Rabelais, to whom she gave an asylum and a cure, than to the flowery flatteries of Marot. She married Jean de Brosse, chiefly because he favoured the doctrines of the Reformation; and by her orders, Calvin translated the Psalms. We look at her, in the pride of her success and her power, and lo! another figure glides out of the gloom, and takes its place beside her. She does not lower her clear outward gaze before it—no, not she, for it is that of Diana of Poitiers, of Madame *la grande Sénéchale*, many years older than she—beautiful, to be sure, but *passée* in comparison with her vigorous buxom comeliness. She feared nothing, for she was flattered and courted by the world around, though execrated by that beyond her, who held her responsible for the faults of the king, and suffered by her ambition and greed. There is another phantom coming forward now beside that of Diana—this is the young Duchess of Orleans, the unloved Florentine, wife of the gloomy, dull young man, of whom his father said: 'Time fails to make a Frenchman of the Spaniard.' The childless Queen Eleanor lived in patient retirement, pitied a little, it may have been, by her stepson, but courted by none. The childless Duchess of Orleans had but an uncertain following, though she strove hard for popularity, and had enriched the life of the court with transplanted Italian *fêtes*, and organised a system of frivolity so complete that much-dreaded leisure was entirely excluded. Looking at the pageant of the court in those days, it is hard to realise the after-story of the Florentine, as wife, mother, and sovereign, than whom not one more absolute ever openly swayed the sceptre of St Louis.

When we tread the courts of Fontainebleau, we

are apt to think of a scene enacted in the courtyard one day, memorable for ever among days, when a greater than any Valois or Bourbon bade his soldiers adieu—of a scored, scratched table, in a room yonder, where surely the hardest words that ever mortal man was bidden to set down were written; of two empresses, a Creole and an Archduchess of Hapsburg-Lorraine; of a golden-haired, blue-eyed child, whose ephemeral kingship was all the bitter satire that it claimed the Eternal City for its seat; of a proud, noble, hapless woman, her faults forgotten in her fate; of a murder done by command of a queen, and before her eyes: of these and a thousand other thronging memories, as we remount the stream of time, from Napoleon and Pius VII., from Marie Antoinette and Christina of Sweden, to the days of Sully, and Gabrielle, and Henry the Great.

We may easily pass by, unnoticed, a gray old stone, beneath a low arch in one of the old corridors. Looking at it, we find it engraved with the device of the salamander, the badge of Francis I., and, like the crystal of the magician, it holds a world of fate and fortune. When the salamander curled grotesquely about the corridors, and over the doors and upon the ceilings, before the blazon of Diana of Poitiers and Henry took its place, before the huntress, with crescent moon above her brows, and flying sandalled feet, shewed how art had pressed classic lore into the service of flattery, Catharine de' Medici had fought her silent fight for the power she coveted, and had won it. Her weapons had indeed been borrowed, and she had suffered sorely in the contest, for even such absorbing ambition as hers could not quite destroy the more womanly instincts; but she had come through the ordeal a victor, and hardly a woman any more. By the influence of Diana of Poitiers, her husband's character had been changed; an unlawful love had developed all his weaknesses, and placed him at the mercy of his wife, to whom weakness was unknown. And though the full triumph of her success was long in coming—did not come, indeed, until Montgomery's lance had slain Henry of Valois, and with his life, the long day of the perennially beautiful favourite had ended—hers was the nature which can wait, with never-failing patience, and feel to the fullest the keen delight of each instalment of success. When the day came, the Florentine proved herself equal to the occasion, in power and grasp of intellect, in inflexibility of will, and in dignity and reticence of speech. She must have felt her greatness in every nerve and fibre of her being, when the pale, heavy-eyed boy—who made so faint a struggle against disease, combined with ignorant prejudice which precluded its relief—with his beautiful girl-wife, no longer Queen-Dauphiness, but queen of France and Scotland, knelt down beside her chair, and hiding his face in her purple robe of mourning (for the Florentine would not wear the white dress of royal widowhood), asked her for wisdom and guidance. Perhaps she felt that thrill more keenly still, when, the foes of her faith and the opponents of her power destroyed, her lying version of the massacre prepared, to silence foreign potentates, who had no strength as against France for more than murmuring, she inspected the mutilated remains of the murdered Admiral, and declared, with horrible enjoyment, that 'the corpse of a dead enemy smells sweet.' Soon, François was dead, and the 'White Queen' had gone to her own

inclement land, to wage the weary war with her destiny, which was to be ended by the axe in the great hall at Fotheringay. Charles she ruled easily; Henry, her well-beloved son, was sure of a crown; her daughters gave her no trouble. Marguerite, beautiful, sparkling, learned, fitfully generous, systematically vicious, with intellect equal to any demand that might be made upon it, but so satisfied with the sovereignty of her beauty and lawlessness, that she left scheming in every other direction to those who required occupation or recreation outside the world of love and literature—comes into the phantom group, around the dark central figure of Catharine, and in her train a sparkling company, so numerous we cannot count them, so brilliant that they dazzle, so brief that they do but flash upon our vision, and are gone. Statesmen, churchmen, poets, cavaliers, brave men, beautiful women, marvellous splendour, wonderful recklessness, disregard of life, and faction strife and hatred; the steady progress of the world outside that gorgeous, wicked court; and within it, the lowest tone of morals, the most perverted sense of honour, the most open depravity of conduct that the world had witnessed since the nominal close of the rule of heathenism in Europe. Bright and beautiful are the phantoms, and bloody withal, for treachery and cruelty were busy there; and in the crowd, resembling one of Doré's magic pictures, turbulent and shifting, we catch sight of love-locks steeped in blood, and know them for those of La Mole and Coconnas. And when Charles—famous for cruelty, intrepid sportsmanship, his murderous aim on St Bartholomew's eve, and the composition of one anagram—has faded away, and the transformed hero of Jarnac and Moncontour glides ghostly on the scene, in fantastic dress of black velvet, buttoned with death's heads, we discern behind his pitiful, mournful figure the phantoms of the Minions, and of the dastard brother of the king, the Duke of Anjou, and Bussy d'Amboise. Here, too, is the meek figure of Louise de Vaudemont, pious and resigned, as became the neglected wife of a Valois; and here is Du Guast, the enemy of Marguerite, and the Baron De Viteaux, hired, by the beautiful, dainty young princess, to murder him—hired, too, within the walls of a church of the Augustines.

Whether the ghostly crowd be greater or less, and however it shifts and changes, the central figure remains undisturbed. Supreme in intellect, in power, and in the consummate knowledge of human nature, which rendered the vices, passions, and abilities of others tools and weapons whereby she wrought out her own purposes, Catharine confronts us, from whatever point of view we look at the phantom pageant. Withdrawing, sometimes, with a feigned abdication of power, from the conduct of affairs, she brought the helpless sovereigns, who were less her sons than her puppets, to sue submissively for the reimposition of the yoke, never really removed. Unrelaxing in vigilance, subtle and fearless, no royalty was ever more real than that of this woman, who entered the proudest court in Europe almost on sufferance, and held every member of it, through a succession of reigns, under her feet. Hers is a splendid story, in its historic aspect, with all its guilt; in its domestic aspect, there can hardly be a more terrible. When the light is quenched, and the music dies away, and all the stir and circumstance of royalty are put aside, when the scene closes behind her solitary figure,

and it stands quite alone, even as the soul in the judgment, what is her history ! A girl, trained in a school of tortuous policy, religious bigotry, and remorseless greed. A princess, denied the homage of a court, and witnessing that homage spontaneously paid to those to whom the laws of God and of man alike deny it. An unloved wife, winning in a long course of time observance and respect from a husband wholly, passionately, and until his violent death, devoted to another woman, with whom she could not compete in any charm of womanhood. A mother of kings, who saw her children die, the first of sheer pain, the second of a horrible disease—under a visible curse, said the voice of popular superstition, which she, however raised above other weaknesses, shared ; of poison, said another rumour, and she knew it was believed. A mother of sons, whose fierce unnatural hatred was, perhaps, the most repulsive feature of their characters ; of daughters, of whom one was a by-word of infamy, even as she was a paragon of beauty and genius ; while the others were miserable in their greatness. Eager questioner of the future, eager gazer into the abyss, as she was, had she ever seen in necromancer's mirror the face of the kinswoman who should push her daughter from the throne of France, and share it with Henry of Navarre, the only human being she had ever really feared, the one enemy she could never conquer ? Had the haughty sovereign, doomed to see the dynastic extinction of the Valois, she, who never nursed a grandchild on her knee—she, whose youngest son died miserably in a corner of his brother's kingdom, in banishment and disgrace—ever beheld in any mystic vision the figure of the fanatic monk who should slay the last of the Valois ; or learned from the prediction of any seer, that the sepulchre of the kings should gape for her in 1589, and the same year should see ' the Bearnais ' in the seat of St Louis ?

GRANDFATHER'S PET.

THIS is the room where she slept,
Only a year ago—
Quiet, and carefully swept,
Blinds and curtains like snow.
There, by the bed in the dusky gloom,
She would kneel with her tiny clasped hands,
and pray !
Here is the little white rose of a room,
With the fragrance fled away !

Nelly, grandfather's pet,
With her wise little face—
I seem to hear her yet
Singing about the place ;
But the crowds roll on, and the streets are drear,
And the world seems hard with a bitter doom,
And Nelly is singing elsewhere—and here
Is the little white rose of a room.

Why, if she stood just there,
As she used to do,
With her long light yellow hair,
And her eyes of blue—
If she stood, I say, at the edge of the bed,
And ran to my side with a living touch,
Though I know she be quiet, and buried, and
dead,
I should not wonder much ;

For she was so young, you know—

Only seven years old,
And she loved me, loved me so,
Though I was gray and old ;
And her face was so wise, and so sweet to see,
And it still looked living when she lay dead,
And she used to plead for mother and me
By the side of that very bed !

I wonder, now, if she
Knows I am standing here,
Feeling, wherever she be,
We hold the place so dear !
It cannot be that she sleeps too sound,
Still in her little night-gown dress,
Not to hear my footsteps sound
In the room where she used to rest.

I have felt hard fortune's stings,
And battled in doubt and strife,
And never thought much of things
Beyond this human life ;
But I cannot think that my darling died
Like great strong men, with their prayers
untrue—
Nay ! rather she sits at God's own side,
And sings as she used to do !

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